

## Preventing Dehydration: Starts Right Here (I)

As one of the most popular sports in the world, it is not surprising the huge number of kids involved in youth soccer here in Maryland; and the numbers continue to climb. With the increasing growth of youth soccer comes the increasing possibility of dehydration and its related conditions. Over the next couple of articles, we will look at prevention strategies for before, during and after practices, games, and tournaments.

Let's start with a couple of simple facts that are a **given** here in Maryland. Maryland is an area where the weather can be cold one day with bone-chilling winds or the next day tipping thermometers with tri-digit numbers accompanied with a sweltering humidity. You know what they say here in Maryland, "If you don't like the weather, stick around... it will change". It is with the changes in weather that we become less aware of staying hydrated. If we lived in Arizona, it would be more obvious to be aware of the hydration needs of our kids; however, it is important to understand that we must make a conscious effort to address it in every climate. We will cover the importance of heat "acclimation" (getting used to the hot temperatures) and the importance of hydration in all climates.

More and more kids are getting involved with not only highly competitive sports, but also intramural and recreational activities, and as such, shocking their bodies with new physical demands. This in and of itself creates all new challenges for the kids, parents and coaches. Unfortunately, hydration is pushed to the back burner as attention and focus on completing a physically grueling practice becomes the priority or not enough emphasis is placed on a secondary activity leaving the importance of hydration as a fleeting thought.

Limited access that parents have to their kids or coaches have to their players can lessen the opportunities to ensure proper fluid intake throughout the day. To perform mentally and physically, the body requires balanced fluid intake. The results of taking dehydrated, stationary bodies that have been sitting in school all day and challenging them with a practice based on speed, agility and fine motor skills can have less than favorable results. The key is and will be education. Prevention has to start in the home, educating your children. Coaches should be working to get the message out to where it really needs to be - the players and back to their parents.

Like many of the soccer skills children learn, these lessons can play a huge part in the future health and success of these young athletes both on and off the field. In the coming weeks, we will look at defining dehydration and the affects it has on the young body. We will look at hydration tips and the overwhelming products that are available. We'll then address the risk factors and finding preventative strategies for each.

Prevention starts here and now.

Yours in Health,

*Dr. Sok*

Dr. Alan K. Sokoloff, D.A.C.B.S.P.